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ABSTRACT

In our global information society, citizens of most nations, states, and communities have the opportunity to compete for jobs to produce standardized products of about the same quality. It is smart people--not smart machines--that separate one competitor from another. The foundation of a healthy economy for Kansas is people, the human capital, represented by their knowledge, skills, organizations, and motivations. The jobs that exist in an information society demand that employees be highly numerate, literate, and innovative. Effective educational institutions in Kansas must prepare workers to take responsibility for their lifelong learning and training, to set and achieve goals, and to collaborate with others in overcoming barriers. Finding new ways of integrating learning and education into the community will result in greater business opportunities, a more positive community climate, and a better quality of life. Kansas communities must be restructured to meet these goals using technology-driven communication systems and lifelong learning centers. Communities working together, sharing human resources, and having successful access to information and applications of technology will determine the economic livelihood of Kansas communities. (KM)

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CHANGE AND PROGRESS START WITH EDUCATION

Introduction

Changes are upon us that are perhaps more far-reaching than those which emerged from the Copernican, Darwinian, and Freudian revolutions. A major change in the way we view ourselves and the world is under way that will affect education, business, and life generally.

Arthur Young, a philosopher, and Charles Muses, a mathematician, collected the views of some of the creative people of our time, plus other concept changers, in a book called *Consciousness and Reality.* They believe that we face a moment of evolutionary truth for the race and that what man does with it will be more important than all the previous events of history.

A horse-and-buggy approach isn't practical in a rocket-speed age. We are running out of time. We seem to be running down the old trails in all areas of society and education while other countries are breaking ground in ways to produce superlearners, superworkers, and supersocieties.

Because society will continue to change at an increasing rate, it is individually and socially vital that each person develop abilities which will enable him or her to continue productively through even the sharpest of socio-technical change. It has become imperative for education to organize a fabric of human, material, aesthetic, and technological resources to enable each individual to become maximally capable in benefiting himself or herself while benefiting society. The relationship between the needs of a rapidly developing society and individual development will be dynamic, not static. Education is the vital connection among society, work, and the individual.

Our Challenge

In our global, dynamic, information society, citizens of most nations, states, and communities have the opportunity to compete for jobs to produce standardized products of basically the same quality. What separates one competitor from the other? It is smart people, not smart machines. As we become more cognizant of the impact of the information society, we learn that it is our ability to analyze, innovate, and collaborate which gives us the competitive edge and allows us to maintain a high quality of life. The people residing in the rural, suburban, and urban communities of our state are our greatest asset for economic survival in the twenty-first century.

Information and human capital are the important resources in the economy of the information age. Productivity is no longer a matter of making more of what we already make at less cost. The foundation of a healthy economy is

people--the human capital represented by their knowledge, skills, organizations, and motivations. Employers want workers with good basic academic, problem-solving, and information-gathering skills. The twenty-first century work force must know how to learn, think creatively and critically, and communicate effectively. The job requirements in an information society demand that employees be highly numerate, literate, and innovative. To meet the challenges of a changed information society, effective educational institutions must prepare workers to take responsibility for their lifelong learning and training, to set and achieve goals, and to collaborate with others in overcoming barriers.

In our information society, we must ensure that communities are structured to encourage a favorable economic future for Kansas by fully capitalizing on the two most valuable resources--people and information. To meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, there is need for an interdependence between educational institutions and the community. Education is not an island unto itself but a part of a dynamic, changing society.

As the organization of work changes in our technological, information society, the people within the organization must change. A community's ability to prosper and grow depends upon the success of the work force within the community. Schools must become community resource development institutions. Business must become a collaborator as the school becomes a learning center for citizens of all ages to acquire continuous knowledge and skills needed for the economic well-being of the community.

We must see school as a learning community that serves as the hub of human resource development activities where persons of various age groups are involved. The school works with social agencies, businesses, and community groups to develop methods of strengthening learners' experiences and the larger community. Examples of some of the programs that may be provided in a learning community center are offices for social security workers, counselors, family social workers, child care centers, latchkey programs, fitness programs for adults, meal services for senior citizens, job training for adults, adult education, city/school libraries, and many more.

Learning community centers are not simply a means of providing multipurpose use of a building. Rather, they are designed to ensure interaction and learning opportunities among groups. Some schools and communities have moved in this direction initially as a means of cost effectiveness. Most have found that the values of interaction and service have produced greater learnings, a sense of self-confidence, and a greater sense of community and responsibility for individuals involved in the activity. The values which are inherent in the learning community are the values needed in a global, information society. They include the following:

- learning is a continuing need from birth to death
- learning involves the physical, emotional, and intellectual capabilities of an individual; holistic approaches are needed to support integration and growth

- learning is the result of positive human interactions--all of us are learners and all of us are teachers
- learning is essential to the community, and schools must be part of the mainstream of the community.

Finding new ways of integrating learning and education into the community which will result in greater business opportunities, positive community climate, and a better quality of life must be your and my goal. We must rethink the concept of community to be that of clusters of Kansas communities structured to meet our goal, using technology-driven communication systems and lifelong learning centers. Communities working together, sharing human resources, and having successful access to information and application of technology will determine the economic livelihood of Kansas communities.

Summary

The time to focus our attention on a new trail for making the decisions that will affect the economic development and the leadership role Kansas will have in the twenty-first century is now. There is little question that the solutions to the problems of the communities of the 1960s and 1970s will not work for Kansas in the twenty-first century. Our best and our brightest would not be leaving their families behind in Kansas if we were creating jobs here. We must collaborate to teach our young people to create jobs. We continuously must train and retrain our citizens to learn new technologies for the dynamic society of the twenty-first century. Both of these endeavors require long-term financial support and our individual, organizational, and community interdependence. If Kansas is going to develop an economically-viable role in the next century, it must look for new solutions and new leadership with a vision of the twenty-first century.

That vision will show 1) the latest applied research assisting citizens to start and to maintain a small business leadership status, 2) lifelong learning being supported through communication technologies and a vast network of educational institutions and human resources, 3) communications technology linking the community to worldwide markets and resources, and 4) business/economic environments facilitating innovation and adaptation to change. Lifelong learning for all citizens is the key to realizing this vision.

Growth and enhancement depends on our use of human capital and information to develop competitive, productive, small businesses in Kansas communities. We cannot expect a rapid, inexpensive solution to economic prosperity. Prosperity will not be achieved by transporting businesses to Kansas from outside the state. Our business investment in the future will be through human resource development which may require tax increases, not tax breaks. From these increases, learning centers can be structured to respond to human resource needs of the competitive environment of the twenty-first century.

With aggressive leadership, strong work ethics of Kansans, and a new vision at the state and local level, we have an opportunity to produce superlearners, superworkers, and a supersociety. We have an opportunity to give our citizens a high quality of life in the twenty-first century.